

CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a connectionless network to provide a priority routing
5 service for a network user having a plurality of customers communicating with said user
via said network, the network comprising a plurality of network elements and links
therebetween, the method comprising:
- maintaining an express route comprising one or more said links between two end
elements;
10. at least one said end element arranged to identify data packets originating from
said user and destined for a said customer or originating from a said customer and
destined for said user and diverting said packets along said express route.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said route is bi-directional, both said end
15 elements being arranged to identify and divert said packets.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said maintaining step comprises
reserving bandwidth on said links forming said route.
- 20 4. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said route has one end element adjacent
or forming the network entry point of said user.
5. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said diverting step comprises modifying
a forwarding table within one said end element such that data packets having a
25 destination address corresponding to said user are diverted along said route.

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6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said diverting step comprises filtering data packets within the other said end element such that data packets having a source address corresponding to said user are diverted along said route.

5 7. A network element for use in a connectionless network comprising a plurality of network elements and links therebetween, the network element comprising:

means for routing data packets onto another element dependent on a destination address of said packets;

filter means for identifying and diverting data packets having a source address
10 corresponding to a user, said identified packets being diverted to an element not specified by said routing means and forming part of an express route for said user.

8. A connectionless network comprising:

a plurality of network elements and links therebetween;

15 means for maintaining an express route comprising one or more said links between two end elements;

wherein at least one said end element is arranged to identify data packets originating from a network user and destined for one of a plurality of customers of said user or originating from a said customer and destined for said user and diverting packets
20 along said express route.

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